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AGAWAM

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CORONAVIRUS

Virus hits home with 5 cases

Mayor asks residents to follow emergency orders

By Michael Ballway
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Five Agawam residents have tested positive for Covid-19, Mayor William Sapelli announced on Tuesday.

They and their household members have been quarantined under orders from the town Health Department and state Department of Public Health, he added. The announcement came on the same day that the governor issued a “stay-at-home advisory,” and ordered the closure of “non-essential” businesses, in all of Massachusetts. It also followed a week that saw Agawam close all personal care businesses and further reduce town government services.

“It is crucial for residents to remain vigilant in this unprecedented environment and take every precaution to protect themselves, their family members and the community,” Sapelli said in a statement.

The Agawam cases join approximately 1,155 other confirmed cases in Massachusetts as of March 24. Statewide, there have been 11 deaths attributed to Covid-19, the disease caused by the 2019 novel coronavirus.

Health Agent Kathleen Auer on March 20 had ordered that all personal care establishments close March 23 until further notice — any business where staff and clients are forced to be within 6 feet of each other, such as hair and nail salons, babershops, spas, massage and body art establishments and driving schools.

This was followed on March 23 by the order from Gov. Charlie Baker stopping all in-person service at “non-essential” businesses as of Tuesday. The governor’s ban will end at noon Tuesday, April 7, unless it is extended.

Emergency aid

Police and fire departments in Agawam remain fully staffed, 24 hours a day, but most in-person services have been suspended.

Police, firefighters and ambulance will respond to all 9-1-1 calls. EMTs are asking, however, that anyone who calls for service

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SCHOOL STREET PARK

Closing the barn door?

Board wants a usage plan before spending \$329K

By Michael Ballway
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Town officials are looking for money again to fix the School Street Barn. But they’re also looking for a reason why it matters.

“This is an old building which is going to serve no purpose other than being on the historical register, and we’re going to spend a quarter-million dollars,” protested Richard Maggi, a member of the town’s Community Preservation Act Committee, at a meeting earlier this month.

He was responding to a proposal to appropriate \$329,530 on repair work at the barn, located at the entrance to School Street Park near the corner of School Street and River Road. The money would come from the CPA, which is funded by a 1 percent surcharge on Agawam property taxes and matching grants from the state. At their March 4 meeting, the CPA Committee agreed to discuss the matter further before deciding whether to recommend the expense to the City Council, which would make the final decision.

Several committee members joined Maggi in objecting to spending money on a renovation project that won’t even allow the building to be opened to the public, because it is not fully handicap-accessible.

“It’s going to be very difficult for me to vote for it,” said CPA Committee Chairman Henry Ko-



Officials are considering a \$329,530 project to rehabilitate the town-owned School Street Barn — but not to open it to the public.

PHOTOS BY
MICHAEL BALLWAY



BARN | page 11

ELECTION

Senate primary reslated for May

By Michael Ballway
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Voters in Agawam will have to wait to choose their next state senator.

The Massachusetts Senate on Monday voted to delay the March 31 special election to Tuesday, May 19, according to the secretary of state’s office. Additionally, the Legislature and governor agreed that day on a law to expand access to absentee voting.

Two candidates are vying for the open seat, Agawam businessman John Cain, R-Southwick, and state Rep. John Velis, D-Westfield. The senate district includes all of Agawam and Feeding Hills, as well as nine other cities and towns ranging from Tolland to Holyoke, and four precincts in Chicopee.

As the coronavirus pandemic has prompted the closure of government offices across the state and advice that residents to avoid any gatherings and unnecessary travel outside the home, voter advocacy groups and some elected officials had pressed Secretary of State William Galvin to move the election date.

Debra O’Malley, the director of communications for the secretary of state, said the executive branch couldn’t act until the Senate, which had called the election in

PRIMARY | page 5

ROBINSON STATE PARK

Hikers, bikers still welcome despite coronavirus

By Shelby Macri
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While most non-emergency government services are closed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, recreation facilities like Robinson State Park were still open earlier this week.

Going to the park remains one of the few leisure activities outside the house that officials are still encouraging people to do — though there are a few changes to park policies.

“Due to the coronavirus spread, there will be no public bathrooms available in the

park, and the picnic areas will be closed to deter social gatherings,” said Park Supervisor Andy Gloss. “We’re encouraging hiking or mountain biking, and if people are visiting in groups, we ask that they practice social distancing as best they can.”

Robinson State Park, like other parks owned by the state Department of Conservation and Recre-

PARK | page 5

Robinson State Park in Feeding Hills is open for hikers and bicyclists despite the coronavirus state of emergency.

PHOTO BY SHELBY MACRI



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POLICE LOG

The Agawam Police Department responded to 292 calls for service March 16-22. There were no arrests recorded in the public log.

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CLUES ACROSS

1. As soon as possible

5. Gateway (Arabic)

8. Doctors' group

11. Madder genus of plants

13. A team's best pitcher

14. Ancient Greek sophist

15. Go up

16. Neither

17. Bolivian river

18. Manila hemp

20. Comedienne

30. Dog with long, silky coat and drooping ears

31. Sun up in New York

32. Lead alloy

33. Eastern Asian plant

38. Rapid deployment force (abbr.)

41. Japanese warrior

43. Festivity

45. Interruptions

47. Nonsense (slang)

49. Data mining methodology (abbr.)

50. Calvary sword

55. French river

56. Global business conference (abbr.)

57. Afflicted

59. Con man's game

60. No (Scottish)

61. Jewish spiritual leader

62. Fish

63. Camera term (abbr.)

64. Impudence

67. Dark brown or black

CLUES DOWN

1. A continuous portion of a circle

2. Genus of seabirds

3. Infant's dining accessory

4. Native Americans from Arizona

5. Popular fruit

6. Poisonous plant

7. Scolded

8. Assists

9. Hand (Spanish)

10. Amazon product identifying system (abbr.)

12. Basics

14. Cain and ____

19. Malaria

23. Indicates particular shape

24. Respiratory disease

25. Central Standard Time

26. Imitate

27. Golf score

28. A place to lay your head

29. Three cards of the same suit

34. Not in

35. Human gene

36. Ancient Chinese philosophic concept

37. French river

39. Thinks up

40. Type of geological deposit

41. Helps little firms

42. Area units

44. A device to remove

45. Secret political clique

46. Polite interruption sound

47. Foundation

48. Clare Boothe ____, American writer

51. Swiss river

52. Prejudice

53. Actor Idris

54. Resistance fighters

58. Speak disrespectfully of

CROSSWORD SOLUTION ON PAGE 4

Services continue online during library closure

Agawam's library is closed until at least March 28 and even the book drop is locked, but town residents can still access many resources — including applying for a temporary library card — over the Internet. "Although our patrons will not have access to our physical collections, there are many resources available digitally and through our streaming platforms," library staff said in a press release this week. "To ensure access, we have relaxed some of our standard operating procedures so that more people can enjoy our online materials."

Current library card holders can log in using their card number and PIN at www.agawamlibrary.org/research/databases-2, to access a variety of educational and entertainment resources, or www.agawamlibrary.org/research/ebooks-streaming for e-books. Those who need to reset their PIN can visit bark.cwmars.org/eg/opac/password_reset. Agawam residents who do not have a current library card can use temporary cards that will be active until June 1. To request temporary credentials, email libstaff@agawam.ma.us. Residents will need

to supply their full name, street address, telephone number, email and birthdate. Patrons will be issued a temporary card with a PIN, which will allow access to library resources. After June 1, patrons can apply for a permanent card when they visit the library and show a current ID and proof of address. Most of the library's streaming services are available as apps for mobile devices, and can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store: • Libby has thousands of e-books, audiobooks, and magazines.

• Hoopla is another source for e-books, audiobooks, TV, movies, and music. • Kanopy is a streaming film service that offers thousands of films, documentaries and shorts from producers in the U.S. and around the world. • RBDigital service offers access e-books, magazines, British TV productions, music concerts and college-level courses. • Freegal is also available for downloadable and streaming music, with a selection of over 7 million songs. The library building at 750 Cooper St., Agawam,

is closed and locked until at least March 28, and that date may be extended. The book drop is also locked. All items currently checked out have had their due dates changed to May 1. There are no overdue fines accruing during the library closing. Patrons should hold on to these items until the building reopens. While the building is closed, the library's telephone system is unstaffed. Anyone with questions about library services should contact the staff by email at libstaff@agawam.ma.us, or check for updates on social media.

Gov.: Businesses must close, all should stay home

Gov. Charlie Baker this week issued an emergency order requiring all businesses and organizations that do not provide "Covid-19 Essential Services" to close their physical workplaces and facilities to workers, customers and the public until noon Tuesday, April 7. These businesses are encouraged to continue operations remotely. Baker also directed the Department of Public Health to issue a stay-at-home advisory with self-isolation and social distancing protocols. Residents are advised to stay home and avoid unneces-

sary travel and other unnecessary activities during this two-week period. Residents over 70 years of age or with underlying health conditions, who are considered at high risk when exposed to the coronavirus, should limit social interactions with other people as much as possible. The advisory stops short of mandating that people stay home, but the Baker administration has banned gatherings of more than 10 people, a reduction from the 25-person limit established in an earlier order. This includes community, civic, public, leisure,

faith-based events, and any similar event or activity that brings together more than 10 persons in any confined indoor or outdoor space. The order does not prohibit gatherings of more than 10 people in an outdoor space, like a park or athletic field. The DPH issued several recommendations on how Massachusetts residents can limit their potential exposure to the coronavirus. • Residents can leave the home for essential shopping, to get fresh air or exercise, but should practice "social distancing," staying 6 feet away from others, and limit their exposure to frequently touched surfaces. Some stores have established alternative hours for high-risk individuals. • Pharmacy prescriptions should be filled for 90 days, if possible; high-risk individuals should use a mail-order service. • Residents should communicate with family, friends and neighbors through telephone or video chat. Parents should not arrange play dates for their children. • Close-contact activities, such as sports games, should be eliminated. • Non-essential medical care such as eye exams, teeth cleaning and elective procedures must be rescheduled. If possible, health care visits should be done remotely.

Essential businesses

The Baker administration issued a list of designated businesses and other organizations that provide essential services and work-

forces related to Covid-19 that will be allowed to stay open during this two-week period. While these businesses are designated as essential, they are urged to follow social distancing protocols. Exceptions to the business ban include health care facilities, and industries that support health care; health, disability and youth care providers; pharmacies; mortuaries and related businesses; law enforcement and public safety agencies, and contractors who support them; groceries and other food retail, including farm stands and liquor stores; farmers and food manufacturers; restaurant carry-out, quick-serve and delivery services; other businesses related to food, livestock and forestry; businesses related to energy generation and distribution, and fuel distribution; hazardous waste, waste and wastewater businesses; businesses in transportation and logistics, including personal transportation such as auto repair, rental cars, cabs and ride-hailing services; workers involved in the construction, maintenance, operation or inspection of public works; workers in the communications industry, including the news media; workers in information technology; workers in financial services; and workers involved in essential government or defense operations. Businesses and organizations not on the list of essential services are encouraged to continue operations through remote means that do not require

workers, customers, or the public to enter or appear at the brick-and-mortar premises closed by the order. Restaurants, bars, and other establishments that sell food and beverage products to the public are encouraged to continue to offer food for takeout and by delivery if they follow social distancing protocols. On-premises consumption of food or drink is prohibited. Intrastate waste and recycling collection and disposal will continue uninterrupted during the coronavirus emergency. Due to the essential nature of these services, the state will provide relief from state and federal requirements that govern the hours of service allowed for commercial vehicle operators involved in waste and recycling transportation and collection, while maintaining important safety protections and measures. Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Martin Suuberg said, "It is imperative that residents across the (state) be able to rely on key services such as waste and recycling collection and disposal. By issuing this emergency order, we can better protect public health by ensuring that residents are able to maintain proper hygiene, cleanliness, and social distancing in their homes while navigating these new and challenging circumstances." For more information, visit www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-essential-services.

Banks are open, but urge online visits

The Massachusetts Bankers Association announced that banks throughout the state will remain open while keeping their customers and employees safe. According to Gov. Charlie Baker's order issued March 23, financial institutions such as banks are considered essential services and will not be subject to the closure. "While we strongly encourage all Massachusetts residents to heed the govern-

nor's stay-at-home advisory and use online or mobile banking, consumers will continue to have access to banking services during the mandatory non-essential business closure," said Daniel Forte, MBA president and CEO. "The safest place for your money right now is in your local bank, where it is insured up to \$250,000 by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Many Massachusetts banks also have excess insurance to protect your funds."

Consumers needing access to banking services should check with their institution, as many banks have closed branch lobbies, reduced hours or shifted to drive-through-only. However, bank staff are available to serve customers and answer questions. In addition, access to funds through online and mobile banking, ATMs and at point-of-sale transactions remains available during this time. For more information, visit www.massbankers.org.

Share your stories of staying at home

The Agawam Advertiser News wants to know how you're coping with the coronavirus closures and how they've changed all of our lives — no school, no work, social distancing and staying at home.

We can't meet our neighbors in the schoolyards, playing fields or workplaces of Agawam, but we can all share a few snapshots of what life's like with the kids in the house and the home office working overtime. Take a minute to send in an update on how you're doing, what fun enrichment activities the kids have been up to, or anything else that's made the past two weeks a special time in your home. Include full names of the writer or photographer,

and anyone visible in each photo. We'll print the best entries in next week's newspaper, and in subsequent weeks as the state of emergency continues. The best way to contact us is at aan@turley.com.

We would also be glad to publish Agawam children's artwork, essays or photos created during the school closure. Include the creator's full name, age, and school attended.

For all submissions, also include a telephone number and email address. We won't publish this information, but may use it to verify identities or ask follow-up questions.

Stay safe out there — and let us know how you're doing!

Boldyga votes relief for workers, towns

State Rep. Nicholas Boldyga, R-Southwick, is working with his colleagues to respond to the coronavirus pandemic by taking steps to protect the public and provide support for workers who lose their jobs as a result of the outbreak.

The House of Representatives and the Senate have approved a bill waiving the one-week waiting period for laid-off workers applying for unemployment benefits. The changes are retroactive to March 10, the day Gov. Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency in response to the outbreak, and will remain in place for 90 days after the governor's order is lifted.

The Legislature previously enacted a supplemental budget providing \$15 million in assistance to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, as well as local and regional boards of health. This money is being used to support ongoing monitoring, treatment, containment, public awareness and prevention efforts against the virus.

"It was crucial that the legislation took swift action to address urgent issues relating to the outbreak," said Boldyga. "A total of \$20 million in funding will provide

small businesses the means to address emergency needs due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I am proud of the steadfast work that was made to move this legislation along as quickly as possible to assist working class people and small business owners."

The House and Senate this week also passed a bill filed by Baker to assist municipalities with essential government functions during the state of emergency. The legislation allows towns with a Town Meeting form of government to postpone those meetings until after June 30, if necessary, and to reduce quorum requirements to comply with "social distancing" advice.

Boldyga encourages constituents to use the state's website at www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19 to stay informed about the latest developments during the state of emergency.

Boldyga represents Agawam, Granville and Southwick in the state House of Representatives. He can be reached at 413-569-3137, ext. 103, or Nicholas.Boldyga@mahouse.gov.

Bethany food bank still open for local families

Although Bethany Assembly of God in Agawam is closed for in-person services and events, in accordance with Gov. Baker's ban on gatherings of more than 25 people, the church's Food Bank remains open, serving families in need throughout the community.

Food Bank hours are 1-3 p.m. Mondays and Fridays; 6-8 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month; and

9-11 a.m. on the last Saturday of each month.

Clients do not need to be members of Bethany. First-time guests must bring a picture ID as well as a piece of mail with their current address on it. Their information will be entered into the database so they can access the Food Bank once a month.

Bethany Assembly of God is at 580 Main St., Agawam.

Jail pauses inmate visits to slow virus

By Elise Linscott
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The Hampden County Sheriff's Department is making several operational changes in light of the coronavirus pandemic, including temporarily pausing inmate visits and requiring professional visitors to wear face masks.

The department recently had one person placed in preventative medical quarantine for showing symptoms potentially associated with Covid-19, according to a press release. But as of March 13, that person was symptom-free and determined not to be ill and was removed from preventative medical quarantine.

The sheriff last week held a press conference and announced a number of temporary operational changes, including pausing inmate visits for 60 days or until the threat of Covid-19 passes, authorizing two hours of free phone calls per week and giving each inmate three free envelopes per week.

"These are unprecedented times and to adapt, and best protect our staff, the offenders in our care and the general public, we are taking



Sheriff Nick Cocchi details the Hampden County Sheriff's Department response to the coronavirus pandemic at the county jail in Ludlow last week. SUBMITTED PHOTO

unprecedented measures that impact virtually every aspect of our operations," said Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi. "None of these decisions were made lightly and we will continually be evaluating our decisions over the coming weeks to ensure that these changes remain necessary and are the best way to ensure the health and safety of every staff member and person in our care."

Other operational changes include temporarily stopping all offender-based programs and reducing programs provid-

ed by the sheriff's department; allowing attorney, clergy and court-ordered visits only if the visitors wear face masks and avoid physical contact; and altering the PVT's Stonybrook Express bus line, which is subsidized by the sheriff's department and which will temporarily stop bringing passengers to the correctional facilities.

Work-release employees and community service crews assigned to do restitution will discontinue their work until further notice.

Health services will screen and must approve

every request for a transfer from other facilities and the department will not accept a transfer unless the subject has already been in custody for at least 14 days and is shown to be symptom-free.

Non-essential staff have been excused from reporting to work. Meal services for inmates will continue as normal and all medical services will continue with additional attention paid to the transmission of infectious diseases throughout the department's facilities, according to the department.

The Western Massachusetts County Correctional Officer's Basic Training Academy has also been closed until further notice. Academy recruits will be screened by health services and will be assigned to work in the facilities to assist staff once cleared.

Courts across the state have been temporarily closed since March 16. The department has since been working to increase its capacity for video conferencing.

The Hampden County Sheriff's Department serves Agawam and several other cities and towns in the Springfield area, from Chester to Brimfield.

Vets agent to serve on Soldiers' Home board

State Rep. Nicholas Boldyga, R-Southwick, recently announced the appointment of Richard Girard to the Holyoke Soldiers' Home Board of Trustees by Gov. Charlie Baker.

Girard, who serves as director of veterans services for Agawam and neighboring towns, is an Air Force veteran and former president of the Massachusetts Veteran Service Officers Association.

"I am honored to recognize the appointment of Richie Girard to the Holyoke Soldiers' Home Board of Trustees," said Boldyga. "Richie has exemplified tremendous commitment, excellence, and responsibility in caring for our veterans for over a decade. I am certain Richie will continue his success in impacting the lives of countless veter-



State Rep. Nicholas Boldyga, left, stands with Agawam Veterans Agent Richard Girard. SUBMITTED PHOTO

ans and their families in the years to come."

Established in 1952, the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke is a multifaceted health care facility available to eligible veterans from Massachusetts. It is a state-funded,

center, and a multi-service outpatient department.

Girard is based at Agawam Police Headquarters on Springfield Street in Feeding Hills. His office's duty is to provide information, counsel and assistance to veterans and their dependents so that they can receive employment, vocational, educational, medical, pension or other veteran benefits to which they are entitled. Veterans are encouraged to visit the office to learn about local, state and federal benefits for which they may qualify. Girard's office can be reached at 413-726-9781.

Boldyga, who represents Agawam, Granville and Southwick in the state House of Representatives, can be reached at 413-569-3137, ext. 103, or Nicholas.Boldyga@mahouse.gov.

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14 Bobala Road, Holyoke, MA
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Council airs opposition to proposed state gas tax hike

By Michael Ballway
mballway@turley.com

At a brief meeting held this week, city councilors voted 9-2 to oppose the Transportation and Climate Initiative, a regional plan to fight global warming that opponents say will force Massachusetts to raise gasoline taxes by as much as 17 cents per gallon.

“Our economy has taken a brutal hit” with the spread of the coronavirus, said Councilor Cecilia Calabrese. “I cannot in good conscience support this TCI gas tax initiative in light of our current economic climate. It’s going to take a long time for our economy to recover, and putting another ta on the back of the people is the wrong thing to do.”

TCI was conceived as a regional partnership of 12 northeastern states and the District of Columbia “to develop the clean energy economy and reduce carbon emissions from the transportation sector.” Gov. Charlie Baker has spoken in favor of

the plan, which includes a carbon tax that would affect the price of gasoline and diesel fuel.

Councilor George Bitzas, the lead sponsor on the council resolution opposing TCI, said four of Massachusetts’ five neighboring states — Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont — have already opted out of the carbon tax plan. The resolution states that TCI means a gas tax hike “as much as 17 cents per gallon” immediately, “and then gradually increase over time.” It said other regulations and technological innovations are expected to decrease greenhouse gases by 19 percent over the next 10 years, and a gas tax hike would only add 1-6 percent to that figure.

Bitzas said part of his opposition to TCI was the notion that Massachusetts would allow a regional body to set tax policy without any input from voters.

“Our state, by joining the TCI compact, will be ceding its tax sovereignty to out-of-state unelected non-government officials who will be granted the power to further

increase the price of fuel for our state without any approval by our duly elected officials,” Bitzas said.

He also said the state Legislature has already voted this year to increase gas taxes by 5 cents per gallon. Massachusetts drivers already pay a per-gallon state tax of 24 cents, and a federal tax of 18.4 cents per gallon.

Councilors Gina Letellier and Rosemary Sandlin were the only two to vote against the council resolution. Letellier disputed the 17-cent figure.

“I’ve heard much lower estimates for the increases,” she said. “I think with gas less than \$2 a gallon ... we have to look at our roads and bridges. The current president said that he was going to fix our roads and bridges, and that hasn’t happened. I think that, let’s let the Legislature debate on this and get more accurate info.”

Most of her colleagues didn’t see it that way, however.

“The money is going to go back into the state coffers, but ... there’s no guarantee

that money will ever go into infrastructure,” said Councilor Robert Rossi. “If history has taught us anything, throwing money at a problem is not always the solution to the problem. What they can try to do is reduce the number of cars on our highways. What they have to do is put more money into mass transportation. This isn’t the answer to do it.”

Councilor Paul Cavallo said it would be a mistake to think drivers can afford a large tax increase just because gas is relatively cheap now, during the coronavirus emergency.

The vote taken March 23 is largely symbolic. The decision to adopt the TCI carbon tax rests with the state Legislature and the governor’s veto authority. The resolution calls upon Agawam’s state legislators, and legislators throughout the state, to reject TCI. Agawam is currently represented by state Rep. Nicholas Boldyga, R-Southwick; it has been without a state senator since Donald Humason Jr., R-Westfield, stepped down in January.

MassMutual \$1M gift gets area coronavirus relief fund started

The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts announced last week that it would establish a Covid-19 Response Fund for the Pioneer Valley with a lead gift of \$1 million from MassMutual.

Along with MassMutual’s gift, the foundation is contributing \$500,000 to the Response Fund. Big Y, Easthampton Savings Bank, Greenfield Cooperative Bank/Northampton Cooperative Bank and PeoplesBank have also committed to contributing to the fund. Other area businesses and philanthropic organizations are being encouraged to contribute to the fund, as is the general public. Those interested in making a gift to the fund should visit communityfoundation.org/coronavirus-donations,

or contact the Community Foundation at donorservices@communityfoundation.org.

Hosted by the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, the Covid-19 Response Fund will provide flexible resources to Pioneer Valley nonprofit organizations serving populations most impacted by the crisis, such as the elderly, those without stable housing, families needing food and those with particular health vulnerabilities.

Funds initially will be given to existing community-based organizations who currently serve vulnerable populations and who are best able to identify those requiring crisis services.

Katie Allan Zobel, president and CEO of the foundation, said the fund is “another example of our region’s extraordinary generosity and community commitment.”

“Speaking for the Community Foundation, our other partners and the community as a whole, I want to express my deep appreciation to our strong community partner, MassMutual, and their leadership who moved swiftly with this gift to help at this time of crisis,” Zobel said.

Congressman Richard Neal stated, “MassMutual has its roots in the Greater Springfield community, not just because it is where their employees work, but because it is where they live and grow their families. Their generous donation to the Communi-

ty Foundation of Western Massachusetts will ensure that all families across Western Massachusetts have access to what they need during this trying time. Whether it be access to care for seniors, or ensuring food security for those out of work, the Community Foundation and their nonprofit partners will be able to step up and provide for our neighbors in a big way. I am appreciative to MassMutual and the Community Foundation for this tremendously important partnership.”

Zobel said the fund will be flexible in responding to current needs and as unforeseen needs arise in our community.

COVID ■ from page 1

notify the dispatcher of any flu-like symptoms. This will not affect the EMTs’ response, but will allow them to take proper precautions.

Crime victims should report theft, theft from a car, or vandalism using the Citizen Online Police Reporting System under the “police” tab at agawam.ma.us. Unless it is an emergency, people with flu-like symptoms are asked not to come to the police station for routine business.

Requests for police reports can be mailed to the Police Department at 681 Springfield St., Feeding Hills, or apdre-cords@agawam.ma.us.

Requests for firearm identification cards and licenses to carry firearms will not be processed in person. Applicants should obtain a form at mass.gov/firearms-services and mail it to the Police Department. Arrangements can be made at a later date to take a photograph and fingerprints. Anyone with questions at FIDs and LTCs should call the Records Bureau at 413-786-4767, ext. 8606.

Agawam fire stations are closed to the

public until further notice. There will be no in-person processing of permits. Forms can be found at www.mass.gov/lists/fire-safety-division-forms-and-applications and mailed to the Fire Department at 800 Main St., Agawam. Burning permits can be applied for at agawam.ma.us/burning.

For more information about code enforcement or permitting, email afdinsp@agawam.ma.us, or call 413-786-0657. For more information on ambulance billing or reports, email afdchief@agawam.ma.us or call 413-786-0657.

In his statement this week, Sapelli asked residents to show their support for health-care workers and first responders “by any safe means possible,” and offered his own thanks for their commitment and sacrifice.

Senior meals

The Agawam Senior Center is closed, but outreach programs for seniors who depend on them continue. That includes the Meals on Wheels program. In addition to the existing home delivery service, Meals on Wheels is also offering bag lunches on a drive-through basis daily at the Senior Center, 954 Main St., Agawam, to take the place of the congregated cafeteria lunches that are

not being held.

Seniors needing a meal, or who have other questions about senior services during the coronavirus shutdown, should call the Senior Center at 413-821-0605.

School lunches

Schools have been closed since March 16, and are under a state order to remain closed until at least the first week of April. Teachers are using technology to send assignments to students. Students or parents of students who do not have regular access to an Internet device can request one at forms.gle/YTD1b569G4SwwmJU6, or can pick up a form at the schools’ Central Office in the Agawam Junior High School building, 1305 Springfield St., Agawam. Those who do have Internet access are asked to use their own equipment, as the schools have a limited number of devices available.

Schools are offering daily bag lunches to take the place of the cafeteria lunch that students would otherwise be receiving. The lunches are available middays at Agawam Junior High School, 1305 Springfield St., Feeding Hills. Bag lunches will be distributed on a drive-through basis in good weather, or inside the school foyer if necessary.

Families do not have to call ahead or reserve a lunch. Lunches are available to any school-age child in Agawam, regardless of family income or where the student is enrolled.

Town offices

All municipal buildings are closed to the public until at least March 27. Residents with questions or requests can call the town at 413-786-0400 and leave a message with the relevant office. Messages will be checked, as some workers will continue working from home.

Many government transactions can be completed at agawam.ma.us. For those who need to pay a bill by check, there is a lockbox at the front door of Town Hall, 36 Main St., Agawam. Cash should not be placed in the lockbox.

Library

On March 19, the library announced that in addition to closing its doors, the book drop would also be closed. All patrons with items checked out should hold on to them until the library reopens, which could be as early as March 28.

Overdue fines will not accrue during this time. Additionally, all items currently checked out will have their due dates extended to May 1. The library has also announced that it will not accept book donations until July 1.

For the remainder of the closure, the library telephones will not be answered. Staff will be checking their email at lib-staff@agawam.ma.us.

The library continues to offer online services, such as e-books, videos and periodical databases, online at agawamlibrary.org.

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NOTICE

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NEWS & FEATURES

As a paper of record, we attempt to cover all general news, personality profiles, and community features that we know about. This includes all selectmen and school committee meetings as well as spot planning board, board of health, finance, and other town meetings determined by the issue’s relevance to our readers. There are the annual major community event features that we should always cover, but we are more than open to suggestions of other features to celebrate the fabric of our communities and their many interesting occupants. Our loyal advertisers provide funding for this paid staff coverage.

For more information on news or community features for the Agawam Advertiser News, please email mballway@turley.com.

State will offer \$10M in loans for affected businesses

Gov. Charlie Baker last week announced the state will give economic support to small businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic with a \$10 million loan fund.

The \$10 million Small Business Recovery Loan Fund will provide emergency capital up to \$75,000 to Massachusetts-based businesses with under 50 full- and part-time employees, including nonprofits, impacted by Covid-19. Loans are immediately available to eligible businesses, with no payments due for the first six months. Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation has capitalized the fund and will administer it.

"As our administration continues to take steps to protect the health and safety of residents, we recognize the hardships facing the small businesses that create the foundation of the state's economy," said Baker. "This recovery loan fund is a new resource to help small businesses address emergency needs due to the disruption caused by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic."

To apply, business owners should complete a form found at MGCC's website, empoweringsmallbusiness.org. Completed applications, or questions, can be sent via email to mgcc@massgcc.com with the subject line "2020 Small Business Recovery

Loan Fund."

To qualify for the loans, businesses must be able to show verifiable negative impacts from Covid-19. The loan comes with no payments for the first six months, then 30 months of principal and interest payments, with no pre-payment penalty. Businesses can apply for loans of up to \$75,000.

"Our office remains in regular contact with the state's business community to provide updates and receive feedback as the administration continues to expand its comprehensive Covid-19 response," said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy. "These new recovery

loans complement other resources like the state WorkShare program and federal Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, as well as legislative efforts by the administration to support impacted workers."

MGCC is a quasi-public corporation of the state that saves and creates jobs at small businesses, often minority- and women-owned businesses, by providing financial services and managerial assistance. It also promotes economic development throughout the state, focusing on Gateway cities and low- to moderate-income communities. For more information, visit EmpoweringSmallBusiness.org.

PRIMARY ■ from page 1

the first place, passed its own order, which it did on March 23.

O'Malley said there will be no changes to the ballots themselves. Absentee ballots that have already been cast will remain valid and will be counted on the new election day. The only race on the May 19 ballot is the state senate election.

Agawam Town Clerk Vincent Gioscia said on Tuesday that the date change won't be a problem. He said he plans to have hand sanitizer available at all polling locations. As each of Agawam's seven polling locations is in a school building, voters can rest assured that they will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected to reduce the chance of spreading the Covid-19 virus, he added.

Under the legislation passed Monday, voters will have until Friday, May 8, to register for the special election. The legislation also allows anyone concerned about the coronavirus to cast an absentee ballot, which can be done by mail. Voters can also ask to cast early ballots by mail, without having to give a reason. Under previous state law, absentee ballots are available only to people who are unable to visit the polls on election day because of travel plans, religious restrictions or medical disability, and early voting was not available for special elections.

Voters interested in registering to vote or casting a ballot by mail should contact the town clerk at 413-786-0400. Forms for both registration and absentee ballots can be downloaded from the state website at www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleidx.htm and mailed to the Town Clerk's Office, 36 Main St., Agawam, MA 01001.



John Cain



John Velis

The winner of the election will immediately take the 2nd Hampden and Hampshire District seat vacant since January, when Donald Humason Jr. resigned from the Senate to take office as mayor of Westfield. Humason, a Republican, had represented the district since 2013.

Cain and Velis were the sole candidates for state senator in their parties' primary elections, held March 3, alongside the presidential primary.

Agawam has been without Senate representation since January, although the district's office remained open for constituent service. District residents may contact the senator's office in Boston at 617-722-1415, and in Westfield at 413-568-1366.

Whoever wins the May election will serve until the end of 2020. In a quirk of the calendar prompted by this week's date change, the senator may have to file his re-election bid before being elected in the first place, as the state election calendar currently has an April 28 deadline for legislative candidates to submit their nomination papers for the November 2020 election. The senator elected or re-elected in November will then serve the standard two-year term.

STCC offers workforce training courses available from home

SPRINGFIELD — Springfield Technical Community College's Workforce Development Center is offering a range of online courses available 24 hours a day from any device with an Internet connection.

Online education at STCC combines interactive exercises, mini-cases, video and focused reading to ensure courses are not only engaging but that students learn.

"With many people staying home during these challenging times, now is an ideal time to take advantage of our affordable online learning programs to improve your skills or learn new ones," said Dave Buonora, assistant vice president of workforce development.

Among a variety of programs, STCC offers a Managing Remote Employees course, which may be helpful for employers trying to figure out the best way to manage employees working from home or offsite. The course is part of MindEdge Web-Based Education's management suite.

Jobseekers, including workers who have been laid off, also may qualify for short-term training options through MassHire.

Students who are enrolling for the purpose of meeting professional certification or licensing requirements are strongly advised to check with their specific certification or licensing authority to ensure that course content meets any requirements that have been established by that licensing or certification body.

STCC partners with the following Web-based education providers to offer online education:

- MindEdge Web-Based Education, a

provider of online continuing education courses designed to help students improve professional knowledge and skills. Courses are available 24 hours a day from any device with an internet connection.

- Ed2Go Web-Based Education, an online educational content, technology and services company for higher education. They offer hundreds of online courses to assist students in finding a new career or prepare them for advancement in their current position. The programs provide an engaging, supportive, and convenient environment. They are completely online and available 24-7.

- Online Career Training Programs, designed by a team of experts from their respective fields. They work to provide students with a highly effective web-based learning experience. Learn in-demand skills recognized by employers. Most programs prepare students for national certification. Students can start anytime, and work at their own pace. Textbooks and learning materials are included, also loans are available. Expert instructor assistance provided.

- Professional Development for Fitness Industry, in partnership with WITS, or World Instructor Training School, an organization that has been training and certifying fitness professionals for more than 24 years.

For more information, contact the Workforce Development Center at 413-755-4225, email wdc@stcc.edu or visit www.stcc.edu/wdc.

PARK ■ from page 1

ation, has closed all camping areas, playgrounds, athletic fields, sport courts and visitor centers, as well.

The trails remain open, however. The park, with about 800 acres of forest, streams and paths along the Westfield River across northern Feeding Hills, has entrances for hikers and bicyclists along North and North Westfield streets. The main gate at 428 North St., Feeding Hills, is open for vehicular traffic on its usual winter schedule, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays, with no admission fee charged.

Park users are asked to keep at least 6 feet away from other people — "social distancing" — whenever possible, to engage only in non-contact forms of recreation, to avoid groups of 10 or more, and to leave the area if a

large gathering starts to build. People who are ill, over 70 or part of a vulnerable population should stay home, the DCR advises.

DCR has also implemented a "carry in, carry out" policy on waste, as trash is not being collected at parks during the coronavirus state of emergency.

At other park facilities, such as Hampton Ponds State Park in Westfield and the Mount Tom Reservation in Holyoke, DCR has waived all parking fees. In addition to closing sports facilities at its parks, DCR has also closed all state-owned ice rinks, including Fitzpatrick Skating Rink in Holyoke and Smead Memorial Skating Rink in Springfield.

For more information on state parks, forests and reservations, visit www.mass.gov/orgs/department-of-conservation-recreation.



Though Robinson State Park is open for its usual winter hours, the gatehouse and information center isn't staffed. PHOTO BY SHELBY MACRI

PEOPLE/MILESTONE NEWS

As a free service for our readers, we will print all births, weddings, engagements, milestone anniversaries, major birthdays, military achievements, honors and awards. We have a "people news" form available for you to submit these listings. This material is provided to us by our readers and local institutions and we do not charge to print this content.

For more information, or to submit people or milestone news for Agawam Advertiser News, please email mballway@turley.com.

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LOCAL Opportunity IS KNOCKING

STAFF WRITER POSITION

Turley Publications is seeking an energetic person to fill the position of staff writer for two of its weekly publications: the *Ware River News*, which covers Ware, Hardwick and Warren, and the *Quaboag Current*, which covers the Brookfields, Sturbridge and New Braintree. This full-time position is based in our Ware office at 80 Main St. The successful candidate will have strong community journalism skills or the enthusiasm to develop them.

The staff writer will cover municipal meetings, features and general news; essentially everything that unfolds in small towns. Assignments will be for both newspapers as well as other companywide publications.

Qualifications should include:

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience
- Own camera and photography experience preferred
- Enthusiasm for community journalism
- Ability to write clean copy in a fast-paced environment

Please email resume and three writing samples directly to Eileen Kennedy Managing Editor at ekennedy@turley.com.

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Opinion

OUR VIEW

Get counted on census day

Next Wednesday, April 1, marks National Census Day as, for the 24th time, the United States is taking a tally of the nation's population.

A constitutional mandate, the census has been conducted every 10 years since 1790. By now, all Agawam households should have received a letter in the mail with information about filling out the 2020 federal census. It's vital that they do so.

Responding to the census request provides the government with information that determines how it will spend money, plan projects and distribute resources for the next decade — starting with representation in the federal House of Representatives. States can gain or lose seats every 10 years when the census is conducted, as Western Massachusetts residents well know, after former Rep. John Olver's 1st Congressional District was eliminated a decade ago. In the wake of this year's count, state officials will be redrawing the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts again to account for population shifts, growth and decline.

Towns and states also rely on the census financially. Federal funding and grants of more than \$675 billion, which support local social and infrastructure projects in states and communities, are distributed based on data gathered by the census. This is money that goes into our local schools, hospitals, roads, public works and other vital programs.

Local governments, too, use census information for public safety and emergency preparedness. During this Covid-19 pandemic, residents can rest assured that Agawam has enough shelter beds, medical kits and other public health supplies — as long as it has accurate census data.

The government publishes community census data — not personal information — for use by private businesses and nonprofits. These community snapshots help organizations determine where to open a new store or factory, add new jobs, build new homes, revitalize neighborhoods or offer new social services.

The census asks the head of household to fill out information for each person living in that dwelling — name, relationship to the person filing the form, sex, age, date of birth, and race. Additional questions gather information about the living space and everyone in it. By law, the Census Bureau must protect all people's privacy and not identify anyone by name when the data gathered is being analyzed.

It is federal law that every household must respond to the census, and every person living in the United States must be counted. That includes people living in temporary quarters, and even people with no fixed address.

The census questionnaire can be completed online, by phone, or by mail. Starting in May, census takers will be visiting homes that do not respond by the April 1 deadline, to ensure everyone gets counted. The census takers are paid government employees, and they will keep coming until they get a response. Folks who take the time to fill out their census form immediately are saving the government — their own tax dollars — from an unnecessary expense.

Apportionment counts are expected to be delivered to the president and Congress in December, with redistricting counts for the states by the end of March 2021.

For more information about the census, how to respond, view a copy of the questions, why it's important, and security of respondents' privacy, visit 2020census.gov/en.html.

For most respondents, the census form should take only about 10 minutes to complete. The results, however, will be with us for 10 years. Take the time and make sure Agawam is counted.

What do you think? Send your letter to the editor to aan@turley.com.



FAITH MATTERS

You are not forgotten

As I write this, my prayerful thoughts are about you, my faith family and community. I will keep you all in my prayers and I ask that you please follow all that the CDC and our government is recommending. It will change quickly.

Also, keep in contact with anyone you may know who has compromising health issues that puts them at higher risk and our over 60 family, friends and neighbors. This is the time when we need to be there for each other no matter what is in the past. God wants us to forgive and forget. We are His children which means we are all family. This is the time for prayer.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, loving and merciful God, we worship and adore You. In faith, we come before You asking for mercy and forgiveness for our sins against You and Your creation. In this time of anxiety and distress, we lift up to You the Covid-19 situation throughout the world. Father, we beg You to halt the spread of this disease and to grant healing and comfort to those afflicted. Please cover everyone with the Precious Blood of Your Son, Jesus and protect all of us, especially those in the medical field, from any infection and harm.



Deb Brianesco

Lord Jesus, we beseech You to grace government leaders and medical experts with wisdom and knowledge to combat the spread of Covid-19 and to find a cure for it.

Holy Spirit Lord, please breathe peace and new life into everyone. May You grace us with a strong sense of social responsibility to do the necessary, and to be prudent and considerate in our actions. Bless all people to work together as one family of God and to be compassionate to one another.

Most Holy Trinity, we believe in You and we place all our hope in You. You are our strength and our shield; in You our hearts trust; so we are helped, and our hearts exult, and with our song we give thanks to You. (Psalm 28:7)

Immaculate Conception, Mary our Mother, we seek your intercession for us, our loved ones, our communities and everyone in this world.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, our Messiah and King, we trust in You. (x 3)
Amen.

Deb Brianesco, RN, is the pastoral minister at Sacred Heart Parish in Feeding Hills.

Our Back Pages

From yesteryear's editions of the Agawam Advertiser News, compiled by Michael Ballway.

A year ago: More than two dozen local residents and officials attend a state public hearing in Longmeadow on March 27, 2019, to voice their opposition to expansion of natural gas pipelines in the area. Concerns raised include noise from compressor turbines, pollution from gas leaks and further dependence on fossil fuels, including "fracked" gas. None of the speakers at the hearing was from Agawam.

Five years ago: Local schools celebrated "Purple Day," a fundraiser and awareness event for epilepsy, on March 26, 2015. The event was organized by Phelps

School teacher Devin Jorgensen and her charity Colin's Crusaders, named for her eldest son, who began having epileptic seizures at age 3. Colin, then 10, was an A student with a black belt in taekwondo, interested in piano, soccer, basketball and tennis. Jorgensen said her goal is to help all children with epilepsy enjoy a "classic childhood."

Ten years ago: L-A-C-R-O-S-S-E was the winning word for sixth grader Richard Dolan, who was first place in his grade level for the second year in a row at the Agawam Junior Women's Club Spelling Bee, held in the last week of March 2010. Dolan emerged as the victor from a field of 15 fellow sixth graders. Other winners were Colby Jennison in grade 5, and Jacob Frederick in grade 4.

BUSINESS

Turley Publications is liberal with regard to its business coverage policies, but we do have some standards folks need to understand. First, local businesses and merchants are just as much institutions in our towns as the library and schools. Without them, there are no towns.

We will feature coverage of local businesses that are new, have a major expansion, moving, closing, under new management or ownership, celebrating a milestone anniversary, or have been thrust into the news realm. Merchants can request that coverage through the editor, or for our existing advertising clients, through their ad representatives.

For more information on business coverage for the Agawam Advertiser News, please email mballway@turley.com.

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Opinion

COMMENTARY

Can marinating chicken nuggets help with a hot topic?

‘What? How can marinating chicken nuggets relate to today’s hot topics?’ Breathe. Hug your mug. Relax.

Let’s prep some “food for thought” which means anything giving us something to think about – to figuratively digest – for our brains to process. As our brains marinate and steep these thoughts, this process enriches these morsels into internal truths with external value.

“Really?” Yes, “food for thought” is a processing method that we do every day without even realizing it.

Hmm. Could rural roots help grow “food for thought?” Could small-farm life experiences bring nurturing applications to exactly where millions of families find themselves now?

Could farmland’s domestic hens hatch tidbits of truth? Could farm-life lessons from inside a hen’s pen, help with today’s medically-mandated isolation and incubation situations? Yes.

Often, when digging deep into rural roots, simple, well-grounded, life-applications are discovered, observed and learned.

As nature’s instincts occur, basic life-producing and life-sustaining evidences happen

Nestled in New England, two small farmlands, both with hard-working, bi-vocational families of two different national origins, were separated only by a stonewall. Each family lived off what they raised. Each shared their abundance. One farm raised hundreds of White Rock chickens, eggs, fruit trees, and acres of vegetable gardens. The other farm raised a family Jersey cow, cattle, pigs and vegetables for canning. A barnyard mix of Rhode Island Red hens,(with an ornery rooster,) ducks, and a nanny goat were often corralled by a black Labrador Retriever.

How can chicken nuggets be relevant to today’s COVID-19 pandemic?

Chicken nugget No. 1: On the neighboring farm, hundreds of White Rock hen’s fertilized eggs were hen-house safe under a warm, encased, protected brooder, with warm lights on during incubation for 21 days. Incubation develops growth and



Joan E. B. Coombs

maturity both internally and externally. Food for thought: Being incubated at home can be a time of relational nurturing, personal growth and educational development. Incubation with students, spouses and with seniors can bring inter-generational times of caring, sharing and safe keeping.

Chicken nugget No. 2: On our small farm, one half-dozen Rhode Island Red setting hens found isolated places for nesting over their eggs. Brooding hens only leave their nest to eat once a day. They stayed in place. Only moving occasionally, covering their eggs to ensure constant warmth. Food for thought: When healthy isolation is protective, with a specific purpose and focus it can yield dozens of eggs-cellent benefits.

Chicken nugget No. 3: Laying hens, of all breeds, produce white or brown shelled eggs. Although the exterior has different colors, the inside is the same: the egg yolks and egg whites contain valuable protein and nutrients. Chicken meat is dark and

white. Chicken nuggets are shaped pieces of ground, blended, high-protein, nutritious meat. Food for thought: Human exteriors may be distinctively different. Basic human interiors are similar.

Certainly the COVID-19 virus gives cause for great concern and cautions. Homes, educations, careers, businesses, hobbies, sports, lifetime celebrations and events, sports, have all been temporarily put in incubation for life-saving reasons. During these times of this protective isolation, home-schooling and many levels of online education are nationwide. Working from home is helping families stay safe and virus free.

Every day, frontline heroes are protecting, serving and keeping safety a priority wherever we live, worship, work and study. These heroes are behind-the-scenes, on-the-roads and working at counters and cash registers, helping keep food, medicines, and health care needs available.

Yes, nationally and globally, COVID-19 is a simmering hot topic. Hopefully, marinating and serving this working, small-farm view passed your chicken nuggets taste test?

IN THE GARDEN

Compost in the making

We have all been spending a lot of time at home, and for good reason. It feels great to get caught up on all of the tasks around the house that have been put on the back burner. One of those jobs that I’ve been dreading is cleaning out the chicken coop. But alas, this past Saturday my oldest daughter and I got the job done. When faced with the challenge of what to do with the spent hay we had the perfect solution: start a compost pile!

It’s easier than you might think to make your own compost. Most of us have an adequate amount of kitchen scraps and yard waste on hand to generate enough for a small garden. There are numerous books on the subject that go into amazing detail on what to include and what not to include in your compost pile. Simply speaking, your goal is to combine nitrogen-rich ingredients and carbon-rich ingredients together so that they decompose to form compost.

Think of yard waste and garden debris in terms of “green” for nitrogen and “brown” for carbon. Grass clippings, kitchen waste and freshly fallen leaves and weed plants (none with seeds, please) are considered green, whereas pine needles, dried corn stalks and dried leaves are in the brown category. Make alternating layers of these ingredients to form a pile at least three feet tall by three feet wide. Add a shovel full of finished compost or garden soil to the pile every now and then to inoculate it with beneficial bacteria and fungi.

Once you have completed the layering process you can either let it sit a year until next spring, called “lazy man’s compost,” or tend to it on a regular basis and end up with the finished product in a couple of months or less. This will involve watching the pile’s temperature and turning it when temperatures drop so that it heats up



Roberta McQuaid

again and again until decomposition is complete. At this stage, it should be dark in color and crumbly in texture and have an earthy, inoffensive odor.

An annual addition of compost does wonders for the garden. Not only are you increasing its fertility, you are improving its structure. If your soil is on the sandy side, compost works to bind aggregates together to hold more moisture. Amazingly enough, it has the opposite effect on soils with a high clay content; they are better able to drain thanks to compost. There is even some evidence that plant diseases are reduced by its integration into the soil.

Most experts agree that for an established garden, one-half to one inch of compost spread on the surface and mixed into the top few inches of soil, is all that is necessary to maintain status quo. I’ve had good luck incorporating a shovel full of

compost, a sprinkling of lime and balanced organic fertilizer into the planting hole for most vegetable transplants. Generally they require no additional fertilizers for the remainder of the growing season. For vegetables sown in place in the garden, just mix those same ingredients into the top couple of inches of soil prior to planting your seeds. Even perennial borders and shrub beds benefit from an application of compost. If you don’t have the time to scratch it into the soil, simply apply it to the surface around your plants and let the earthworms do the work for you!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 28 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturalist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to ekennedy@turley.com with “Gardening Question” in the subject line.

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AAN15ROP

Grade 4 pancake supper a success



Brianne Salomao, Gianna Sterner, Fiona Kellogg-Brodeur and Leah DeFilipi show off their “dance party” moves to earn extra tips for the fourth-grade class at Granger School. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The Granger School fourth grade held a successful pancake supper fundraiser on March 11 at Partners Restaurant in Feeding Hills.

In addition to serving their families—as well as several teachers and the principal, and their families—the students earned extra tips by telling jokes and performing dances throughout the evening. The money raised will be put toward a fourth grade field trip, graduation items and a class gift to the school.

More than 200 guests were served, with more than 300 pancakes being made.

Organizers thanked several sponsors: Partners Restaurant for donating the space and materials; IHOP for the pancake batter; Waniewski Farms for the sausage; Fitness First and Jump Start Preschool for donations; and the Springfield Thunderbirds for ticket donations for the raffle.



Morgan Kriebel serves her dad Jason and sister Sarah during the Granger School pancake supper fundraiser on March 11.



Jacob Marino and his mom Carrie take a break from serving to eat their pancakes.



The Oberndorf family enjoys their meal of IHOP pancakes and Waniewski sausages in a booth at Partners Restaurant.



Colleen Cain and her mom pose for a photo at the fourth grade fundraiser.



Melissa Kriebel, the pancake supper organizer, helps Adriana Bistany to pull a raffle ticket for Thunderbirds hockey tickets.



Morgan Kriebel, Fiona Kellogg-Brodeur, Gianna Sterner and parent volunteer Sandra Daniele sing for customers.



Above: Tony, Kade and Atlas La-Fromboise have pancakes for dinner at the Granger School fundraiser.



Right: Jacob Marino, Ryan Lukas and Morgan Kriebel were among the fourth grade servers at the March 11 fundraiser dinner.

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SPORTS

ALL-STAR AWARDS

Lusitano Club honors soccer all-stars

By Tim Peterson
sports@turley.com

LUDLOW—The 31st annual Lusitano Alumni & Fans (LAF) All-Star High School Soccer Player Awards Night was held at the Gremio Lusitano Club in Ludlow on March 8.

The guest speaker was John Gibson, who has been the women's soccer coach for the past 20 years. Gibson, a native of London, England, earned his 200th career victory at Springfield College in the fall of 2015.

One high school soccer player from each of the divisions was selected by the head coaches as the 2019 Player of the Year.

The Division 3 boys Player of the Year is Simba Pelletier from Pope Francis High School.

The Division 3 girls Player of the Year is Juliana Dickinson from Hampshire Regional.

The Division 4 girls Player of the Year is Nora Young from Granby High School.

"It's awesome to have been selected as the Division 4 girl's Player of the Year," Young said. "I wouldn't have been able to receive this award without the help of my teammates and coaches."

Young completed her outstanding high school soccer career with more than 100 career points (Goals & Assists). She was also a member of the Lady Rams varsity basketball team and became the school's all-time leading scoring in the final game of the regular season.

"I love both sports equally," Young said. "I've been playing soccer and basketball since I was



PHOTOS BY DAVID HENRY WWW.SWEETDOGPHOTOS.COM
Connor Montagna was a first-team awardee.

very little. I thought about playing soccer in college, but basketball was my first choice. If the two seasons were a little bit farther apart, I would probably play both sports in college."

Young will only be playing college basketball at AIC next year.

It was the second year in a row that a member of the Granby girls soccer team was selected as the Division 4 girls Player of the Year.

"It's very special to see two of our players selected as the Player of the Year during the past two years," said Granby head coach Bob Weaver. "I've coached Nora during the past four years and

she really deserved to receive the award this year. She's a tremendous athlete and is a great kid. We're really going to miss her next year."

A member of the South Hadley girls soccer team, which captured the Division 3 state title last fall, also received the LAF Scholarship Award for the second consecutive year. Carla Jarrett was the scholarship recipient a year ago and Lindsay Marjanski was this year's scholarship award winner.

"It feels very nice to be rewarded for all of the hard work that I've done," Marjanski said. "I'll be attending Holy Cross College and



Nate Mateus represented Agawam boys soccer at the LAF dinner on March 8. Agawam lost in the semifinals last fall.

I'm very excited about it."

Just like Young, Marjanski will be playing a sport other than soccer at the collegiate level. She'll be a member of the Crusaders women's track and field team.

"I've already met the members of the team," she said. "I'm looking forward to becoming a member of the track and field team next year. Holy Cross was the perfect fit for me both academically and athletically."

Marjanski's main event is high jump, but she will be able to do all of the events as a college freshman.

The other scholarship award

winners are Robert Michalski (East Longmeadow H.S), Erin Czelusniak (Lenox H.S), and JT Novitsky (Lenox H.S).

The members of the Division 1 girls first team are Emily DeGeorge (Agawam High School), Hope Santaniello (Agawam High School), Avery Klingensmith (Belchertown High School), and Brooke Samborski (Belchertown High School), Samantha Breton (Chicopee Comp High School), Emily Howard (Minnechaug Regional), Rhiann Ryan (Minnechaug Regional), and Kather-

AWARDS | page 10

SOFTBALL

Western Mass. senior softball league seeks to start season on time

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

While many are hunkering down trying to wait out the coronavirus pandemic that was crippled regular life, and especially the sports world with no competitions of any kind due to the edict from state and federal officials barring gatherings of 25 people or more.

But the Western Mass. Relics, a softball league for senior citizens, is still planning to hold its season-opening jamboree on April 25.

Steve Lepow, the public relations director for the league, says the league has begun booking its field for play, and the Ludlow-based league, which draws plays from all over the region and into Connecticut, claims the field will be available come the start of the season.

"We lease the softball field from Fish and Game and we met the owner and posed the question



The Western Mass. Relics, a senior softball league, play during last season. The softball league is still planning to begin play on April 25 amid coronavirus concerns.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

about having to delay the start of the season," Lepow said. "He assured us the softball field will be available to us even if the bar is closed because of the coronavirus."

The season starts on April 25 with a jamboree of modified

games with the regular season beginning on April 27.

"Full games are supposed to happen on April 27," said Lepow. "We play seven inning games with two divisions. The silver division

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SPRING SPORTS

MIAA: Spring sports postponed to April 27

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

Following the first postponement of spring sports, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association made a subsequent vote to further delay the start of the spring sports to April 27.

The original start date of spring sports was March 16. It was delayed to March 30 when many schools began cancelling classes for two weeks due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The MIAA's Board of Directors were scheduled to meet again by teleconference this week to continue to monitor the situation. However, the March 20 teleconference revealed some decisions that became necessary by the continued postponement of spring sports.

The MIAA has agreed to only hold a postseason tournament is spring sports begins on April 27. If the MIAA has to make another postponement, then the tournaments in all spring sports will be

cancelled and high schools will only play a modified schedule.

Additionally, there will not be any exceptions made to Rule 34, which dictates how many contests a team can have in a given week.

Depending on the sport, the number of competitions in a week can range from two to four. It modifies in the events makeups are held, such as in the case of baseball or softball.

The board also voted unanimously to waive the 10-practice rule before competition can happen. The board voted to make it seven calendars from the start of practices.

The maximum number of competitions was also modified to 12 for most sports for tournament participation. A team must have at least eight contests for postseason participation.

A typical baseball or softball schedule is normally 18 to 20 games, while lacrosse and volleyball

SPORTS | page 10

Sports

Thompson reschedules events, Icebreaker event moved to May

THOMPSON, Conn. -- After conversations with all stakeholders, Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park announced on Tuesday the new date for the 46th annual Liquid Death Icebreaker weekend. The prestigious event is now tentatively set to take place May 15 and 16, including the headlining NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour Death To Plastic 150.

Due to the current COVID-19 outbreak, the date is tentative, as the situation is fluid and changes are occurring across the motorsports industry daily. A full schedule for the event will be released once available.

The original date for the Liquid Death Icebreaker, April 3 to 5, was postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, but Thompson Speedway officials were committed to finding the right date and releasing it to the public as quickly as possible.

"After working with all of the different parties involved, we feel this is the best weekend to run the Icebreaker and kick-

off the Thompson racing season," Terry Eames, the General Manager of Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park, said. "Just like the entire racing community, we are disappointed that we can't start the race season as originally scheduled. However, we will continue to abide by our Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont's Executive Orders and CDC suggestions during this time. We fully expect to begin the season with the Icebreaker, May 15-16, and look forward to seeing everyone back at the track soon."

The health of our valued race teams, fans, staff and customers is paramount during the COVID-19 outbreak. We have cleaned the property thoroughly to do our part to stop the spread of the virus and will continue to do so in the future.

For more information on Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park, visit thompsonspeedway.com and follow the track on social media.

AWARDS ■ from page 9

ine Russell (Minnechaug Regional).

The members of the Division 1 boys first team are Nate Mateus (Agawam High School), Connor Montagna (Agawam High School), Mamadi Jiana (Chicopee High School), Brennan Dort (Chicopee High School), Anthony Quiterio (Ludlow High School), Michael Riley (Ludlow High School), and Michael Tuck Jr. (Ludlow High School).

The members of the Division 3 girls first team are Madelyn Doolittle (South Hadley High School), Anna Evans (South Hadley High School), Teagan Gawron(South Hadley High School), Lindsay Marjanski (South Hadley High School), Paige Marjanski (South Hadley High School), Bridget Sears (South Hadley High School), Tennes-

see Murphy (Monson High School), Alivia Skowyra (Monson High School), and Madalyn Theriault (Palmer High School).

The members of the Division 3 boys first team are Owen Raines (Belchertown High School), Zach Lajeunesse (Belchertown High School), Korey Houle (Belchertown High School), and Ethan Czapowski (Belchertown High School).

The members of the Division 4 girls first team are Julia Frappier (Granby High School), Nora Young (Granby High School), Julia Gauvin (Granby High School), Emily Vallee (Granby High School), and Caitlin Hess (Ware High School).

The members of the Division 4 boys first team are Logan Gerry (Monson High School), Shawn Jalbert (Monson High School), and Prescott Watson (Monson High School).

RELICS ■ from page 9

is for 50 to 65-year-olds and the gold division is for ages 65 and older. Our oldest player is 89-years-old."

The purpose of the league is to have fun and build friendships.

Lepow said regardless of where the pandemic stands, the league does plan to forego typical hand-shaking lines post game.

"We will eliminate hand-shaking lines after the game and fist bumps," said Lepow. "We have safety rules to prevent contact such as two first base bags (orange for the runner and white for the fielder. We also have a screen for the pitchers circle to protect the pitcher."

Lepow says player safety will be a top concern.

"Safety is our number one concern," said Lepow. In addition to the things to the hand-shaking, we are asking any player who is sick not to come. We are also providing wipes or other sanitizers to use on bats. On our website we have information constantly being added to keep players advised on what we are doing to ensure safety."

The commissioner of the league recently emailed players asking them to use com-

mon sense and announce that the season is still on.

The league's only opposition could come at the local, state, or federal level if the games are not exempted from the gathering restrictions that have been made.



The Western Mass. Relics, a senior softball league, play during last season. The softball league is still planning to begin play on April 25 amid coronavirus concerns. SUBMITTED PHOTO

SPORTS ■ from page 9

ball compete in 16 to 18 contests.

According to the board of directors, there is a movement to try and keep student-athletes from missing their senior season, especially after the state tournament was interrupted for basketball and hockey.

"Based on the charge from the BOD to have a spring sport season start date of April 27," the board minutes state. "Discussion regarding a timeline for post-season play took place. The Tournament Management Committee is committed to allow for broad participation at all levels this spring. Keeping student-athletes connected, involved and engaged has meaning and purpose after the challenges that were faced at the end of the winter season and spring sports in general."

School districts across the state have been ordered closed through April 7. That order was made by Gov. Charlie Baker. Baker has not made a decision or set a deadline to revisit that closure and whether or not to extend it.

The MIAA has posted a fluid document on its website answering questions about the current situation. The document is considered fluid and is updated when new developments occur.

The MIAA has specifically stated that no sports can be practice or played prior to April 27. Additionally, coaches unable to interact with their players before that date.

The MIAA plans to provide guidance on health and safety guidelines for spring sports if there are still concerns about the coronavirus when schools resume competition.

The board was scheduled to meet Tuesday morning with an update to be publish after that meeting.

Public Notices

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Commonwealth of
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The Trial Court
Hampden Probate and
Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No. HD16P0538EA
Estate of:
Maureen C. Fredey
Also known as:
Maureen Donatini
Date of Death: 12/21/2015
CITATION ON
PETITION FOR
FORMAL
ADJUDICATION
To all interested persons:
A Petition for S/A -
Formal Appointment of
Successor PR has been filed
by Catherine Marek of
Easthampton MA requesting
that the Court enter a formal
Decree and Order and for
such other relief as requested
in the Petition.
The Petitioner requests
that: Catherine Marek
of Easthampton MA be
appointed as Personal
Representative(s) of said

estate to serve Without
Surety on the bond in an
unsupervised administration.
IMPORT ANT NOTICE
You have the right to
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from the Petitioner or at the
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object to this proceeding. To
do so, you or your attorney
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and objection at this Court
before: 10:00 a.m. on the
return day of 04/17/2020.
This is NOT a hear-
ing date, but a deadline by
which you must file a written
appearance and objection if
you object to this proceed-
ing. If you fail to file a timely
written appearance and objec-
tion followed by an affidavit
of objections within thirty
(30) days of the return day,
action may be taken without
further notice to you.
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UNDER THE
MASSACHUSETTS
UNIFORM PROBATE
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appointed under the MUPC in

an unsupervised administra-
tion is not required to file an
inventory or annual accounts
with the Court. Persons inter-
ested in the estate are entitled
to notice regarding the admin-
istration directly from the
Personal Representative and
may petition the Court in any
matter relating to the estate,
including the distribution of
assets and expenses of admin-
istration.
WITNESS, Hon.
Barbara M Hyland, First
Justice of this Court.
Date: March 20, 2020
Suzanne T. Seguin
Register of Probate
3/26/2020

Commonwealth of
Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Hampden Probate and
Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No. HD20P0476EA
Estate of:
Hannelore Gingras
Date of Death: 12/16/2019

CITATION ON
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FORMAL
ADJUDICATION
To all interested persons:
A Petition for Formal
Probate of Will with
Appointment of Personal
Representative has been filed
by: Richard C Gingras of
Agawam MA and Kevin H
Gingras of Wilbraham MA
requesting that the Court enter
a formal Decree and Order
and for such other relief as
requested in the Petition.
The Petitioner requests
that: Richard C Gingras of
Agawam MA and Kevin H
Gingras of Wilbraham MA
be appointed as Personal
Representative(s) of said estate
to serve Without Surety
on the bond in an unsuper-
vised administration.
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from the Petitioner or at the
Court. You have a right to
object to this proceeding. To
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must file a written appearance
and objection at this Court

before: 10:00 a.m. on the
return day of 04/03/2020.
This is NOT a hear-
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ing. If you fail to file a timely
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further notice to you.
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ested in the estate are entitled
to notice regarding the admin-
istration directly from the
Personal Representative and
may petition the Court in any
matter relating to the estate,
including the distribution of
assets and expensesof admin-

istration.
WITNESS, Hon. Barbara
M Hyland, First Justice of
this Court.
Date: March 06, 2020
Suzanne T. Seguin
Register of Probate
3/26/2020

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Street, Agawam, MA.
Case# 1991 – 270 Main
Street – Usmonov
Case# 1992 – 27 Liberty
Street – Katika
Doreen A. Prouty
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Schools & Youth

Library cancels April events, takes poetry entries by email

After much discussion among staff, the Children's Room at the Agawam Public Library decided this week to cancel all of its in-person programs for April.

The library will still hold its Student Poetry Contest throughout the month of April, with entries being taken by email, Children's Librarian Pamela Weingart said. Entries may be submitted between April 1 and 30 at pweingart@agawamlibrary.org. PDF and JPEG formats are preferred.

Entries must be original works by writers in grades 1-12. Poems may be typed or hand-written on a plain white background, with no illustrations. The poem must fit on one 8½-by-11-inch page, at a standard font size. The poem's title should be at the top of the page; the author's name must not appear on the page. Each poet may submit

only one entry.

Poems will be judged based on spelling, grammar, style and presentation, impact, and originality. All entries will be bound into a book for viewing at the library. Winners will be announced in May.

As of this week, the library is tentatively slated to reopen March 28, though that date is subject to change. If the library remains closed after April 1, poetry contest entries can be submitted by email but will not be able to be dropped off in person, as both the doors and the book drop will be locked.

The Children's Room staff is considering what other activities it can host, when it reopens, that will keep participants at a healthy distance apart.

Press Club college scholarship deadline extended to next month

The Valley Press Club has extended until April 17 its deadline to apply for up to six \$1,000 scholarships for high school seniors pursuing a career in journalism.

The Valley Press Club Scholarships, funded by contributions and dues to the Press Club, are for students from Western Massachusetts or northern Connecticut pursuing careers in print, broadcast or photojournalism.

Primary emphasis is placed on career goals, writing ability, scholastic aptitude

and overall achievement as measured by an applicant's high school transcript, class rank, academic awards, SAT scores and extracurricular activities.

Scholarship applications are available at www.ValleyPressClub.com, high school guidance offices, or by emailing ntassinari@thebige.com.

Applications may be sent by email or by mail to Noreen Tassinari, VPC Scholarship Chair, Eastern States Exposition, 1305 Memorial Ave., West Springfield, MA 01089.

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HCSS-West classes continuing online

WEST SPRINGFIELD — Hampden Charter School of Science in West Springfield is continuing its educational activities online, while the governor's order closing schools until April 6 remains in effect.

HCSS Virtual School has been set up to provide parents and students most up-to-date information about the Covid-19 pandemic and how their school is responding to it. HCSS-West students, who come primarily from Agawam, Holyoke, Springfield and West Springfield, attend online Zoom sessions to connect with their teachers

every day between 10 a.m. and noon. Students also have the opportunity to meet with school counselors.

Teachers assign classwork on Google Classroom, to be completed online. All students have their Chromebooks with them and technical assistance is provided by school IT department online and on site on Wednesdays between noon and 2 p.m.

For more information, visit hampden-charter.org or email school administration at hcswest@hampdencharter.org.

Sign up for Storowton summer camp

WEST SPRINGFIELD — Storowton Village Museum will offer a variety of special summer youth programs for teens and for children during the month of July.

Teen Leader Workshops will take place July 6-9 for youth ages 14-18. Students can experience 19th century trades, like blacksmithing, textiles, and cooking, in a hands-on setting and learn how these trades are still vital in the 21st century. All sessions will be taught by experienced historical instructors and include meeting modern day leaders in these fields.

"New this year will be a look at STEAM in the 19th century, with activities centered around gears and pulleys, building catapults and exploring anthropological archaeology," said museum director Jessica K. Fontaine.

Students interested in Teen Leader Workshops must register by June 25. Full-day sessions are \$250, with half-day sessions for \$150. Students taking two or more Teen Leader Workshops who are interested in attending for free can sign up for the museum's Teen Leader Training Week, taking place July 13-16. This special second session will impart skills and training needed to become a counselor at Storowton's Early American Summer Programs, happening

July 20-23.

"All skills learned during Teen Leader Training Week are adaptable for life outside of our Village, plus teens will get to meet leaders in our community who once participated in youth opportunities here at Eastern States Exposition," Fontaine said.

Children who have completed grades 1-5 by the end of the school year may sign up for Early American Summer Programs. They can pick their own 19th century history adventure, via half-day sessions about toys and games, nature, art and Native American life, homesteading or archaeology. Two full-day sessions will focus on 19th century stage and STEAM (science, technology, engineering and math), complete with components like a friends and family stage performance or a spot in Storowton's Narrow Sea Regatta toy boat race.

Attending all four days costs \$185; a single full day is \$60, a half-day session is \$40, or two half-day sessions are \$60. Registration closes July 9.

The museum is on the grounds of the Eastern States Exposition at 1305 Memorial Ave., West Springfield. For more information about programs, visit www.storowtonvillage.com/SummerYouthPrograms or call 413-205-5051.

BARN ■ from page 1

zloski.

"In order to make it of value, we need to make it usable," added committee member Les Tingley.

Agawam's professional planning staff asked committee members to reconsider their opposition.

"It's a town-owned building and we can't just let it fall apart," said Marc Strange, the town's planning and economic development director. He called the barn "the icon, arguably, of the whole town."

Richard Bennett, who served on the task force that recommended the School Street Barn renovation, said the work was prompted by a storm last spring when a hole opened in the roof and rain was coming in to the barn.

"It's critical right now [that] we appropriate this money to save the wooden structure," he said.

The proposal includes an estimated construction cost of \$247,200, as well \$16,400 in stabilization work on the foundation, a 10 percent contingency and \$56,400 for Crosskey Architects of Hartford, which prepared the plans.

CPA Committee member Vin Ronghi said it looks like some parts of the proposed rehabilitation project use contemporary materials. Although the barn itself is historical, CPA historical preservation funds should only be spent on historically accurate work, he said.

The proposed project would not make any foundation repairs. Maggi said the town shouldn't be focusing on "cosmetic" repairs, such as \$30,000 in finish carpentry, before fixing what was identified five years ago as the chief structural concern with the property.

Strange, however, said an October 2019 analysis showed that "the wooden struc-



The bulk of the spending proposed at the School Street Barn would be replacement of the roofing and siding, which have developed holes over the years. PHOTO BY MICHAEL BALLWAY

ture will fail before the foundation fails," and it's important to replace the roof and siding so that the internal beams do not suffer weather damage.

Crosskey Architects, in a report dated March 3, said the foundation appears to be no worse than it was in 2012. The "stabilize and monitor" option is substantially less expensive than the \$482,100 it would cost to replace the foundation, they said. They recommended stabilizing now, and a full replacement at a later date.

Agawam Procurement Officer Jennifer Bonfiglio said she'd like to see the current plan proceed now, while town boards decide what to do with the barn, with foundation, accessibility and any other renovation work to follow later.

"We presented you with the cheapest option to preserve everything above the foundation and keep it from falling down," she said. "We're not doing anything that would be undone" in a larger project.

Ronghi said he'd like to see a plan for use before spending the first dollar.

"If the public benefit is down the road, then let this project come before us down the road, when it is for public benefit," Ronghi said.

CPA Committee members voted unani-

mously to ask for a workshop meeting with members of the City Council and Historical Commission to determine what they envision as the future use of the School Street Barn, and what level of spending councilors would support.

"There's so many divisive factions in this, I don't think we're going to get any closer than we have for the last 15 years" without a focused discussion, said CPA Committee member Vi Baldwin.

The barn is a landmark in eastern Agawam, a remnant both of the town's agricultural past and of the former Hampden County Jail Farm, which once occupied what is now School Street Park. According to town officials, it is the only remaining double-ramp barn in Western Massachusetts.

In a letter voicing is "full and unanimous support" of preservation efforts, the Agawam Historical Commission called the barn "the last evidence of the property's former agricultural role in the community." It went on to note that Sheriff David Manning received the William Pynchon Award in 1945, in part because his progressive Agawam jail farm provided inmates "fresh air and sunshine and a chance to cultivate the good earth, producing food for their own consumption and to the money-saving of the county."

Controversy over renovating or repurposing the barn is nothing new. After extensive debate, the City Council agreed to appropriate \$447,000 of CPA funds to rehabilitate the structure and rebuild the foundation in 2015. The project turned out to cost more than that, however, so the town changed the scope to a more basic "stabilization" project, focused on the wooden structure. Though the lowest bid came in at \$210,000, the CPA Committee then refused to support funding the project because it did not include foundation work, which it viewed as the more pressing need.

DPW: Don't flush 'flushable' wipes

The toilet is not a trash can because wipes clog pipes, the Agawam Department of Public Works said in a press release last week.

As coronavirus precautions cause more people to use wet wipes, some of which are labeled and marketed as "flushable," the workers that manage Agawam's sewer system asks all homeowners to dispose of them in the trash, no matter what the label says.

Wipes don't dissolve quickly in water, like thin, dry toilet paper does. Instead, they can clog household plumbing and the sewer pipes in the street, as well as critical equipment at the treatment plant. Other items that pose a threat to the sewer system, and should be trashed rather than flushed, include other personal care products, gloves, dental floss, paper towels and grease.

Property owners are responsible for the costs of clearing blockages in their own plumbing, or in the sewer pipe from the household to the point where it joins the sewer main.

For more information about "flushable" products, visit news.wef.org/stop-dont-flush-that. For more about local trash disposal, visit www.agawam.ma.us/288/Trash-Recycling.

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RMV extends expirations for licenses, auto inspections

SPRINGFIELD — The coronavirus state of emergency has resulted in the closure of several Registry of Motor Vehicles locations, but licenses and registrations that would have expired this month and next month are being extended.

In Western Massachusetts, only the Springfield and Pittsfield RMV offices remain open. All AAA branches that offered RMV services have closed. For the remaining RMV offices, transactions will be conducted by appointment only. Drivers may reserve time up to two days in advance at www.mass.gov/rmv.

Customers who make an appointment are advised to arrive on time and prepared for their visit at their selected location, and will be sent a confirmation email that they should be prepared to show on arrival. Customers who do not have immediate needs for necessary and required in-person transactions should delay their visits and not visit a service center without an appointment. All customers are asked to not bring multiple individuals with them to assist with “social distancing.” Only a limited number of customers will be allowed in

each service center at a time.

Hearings will be conducted at only five locations, none of which is in Western Massachusetts. The nearest RMV branch that will hold hearings is Worcester.

More than 40 different RMV transactions can be completed at www.mass.gov/rmv, which will remain active throughout the state of emergency.

Licenses

All Class D and Class DM driver’s licenses, ID cards, and learner’s permits that have expired or are expiring between March 1 and April 30 will have a 60-day extension applied to the current expiration date. The same extension also applies for commercial driver’s licenses (CDLs) and commercial learner’s permits (CLPs) with expiration dates in those two months.

Class D and M learner’s permit knowledge exams have been suspended until April 7. This means the RMV will not offer Class D or M knowledge exams in its service centers until then. Additionally, road tests are canceled through Monday, April 4. Learner’s permit holders may re-

schedule their road test after that date, within the 60-day extension of their expiration date.

CDL road tests are still being administered, at the Wilmington and Milford service centers.

Inspections

Annual vehicle safety and emissions inspections will also have their expiration dates extended by two months.

Non-commercial vehicles with inspection stickers that expire on March 31 (designated by a number 3 on the inspection sticker) must be inspected by May 31.

Non-commercial vehicles with inspections expiring in April (a “4” sticker) must be inspected by June 30.

Non-commercial vehicles with a failed inspection sticker (a red or black letter “R”) due to expire in March must be re-inspected by May 31; “R” stickers expiring in April must be inspected by June 30. Additionally, the one free re-test for these vehicles is also extended to May 31 or June 30, provided the re-test is performed at the same inspection station that performed the initial

inspection.

Regardless of the date of inspection, vehicles issued a failed inspection sticker due to a safety defect (indicated by a sticker with a red letter “R”) should not be driven until appropriate repairs have been completed.

All motorcycle inspection stickers originally set to expire on May 31 must be inspected by June 30.

The RMV is also extending the time during which newly registered vehicles must be inspected, which is typically within seven days of the date of registration.

Newly registered non-commercial vehicle purchased between March 1 and March 31 must be inspected by May 31. Those purchased between April 1 and April 31 must be inspected by June 30.

Registrations

Vehicle registration expirations will not be extended at this time. Most vehicle registrations can be renewed online at www.mass.gov/rmv.

State launches coronavirus text messaging alert system

Gov. Charlie Baker on Tuesday announced the launch of a new text-based notification system to deliver important information about Massachusetts’ response to the coronavirus pandemic.

“Throughout this outbreak, we have consistently reminded our residents to get their information from trusted sources. Today we’re making that easier,” said Baker. “With the addition of this new communication tool, we’re making it easier for everyone to stay informed about state actions and important announcements related to Covid-19.”

The new messaging tool called “AlertsMA” will allow residents to subscribe to real-time notifications by texting the keyword COVIDMA to 888-777. After signing up, state and public health officials can send short messages and links to information directly to a resident’s cell phone or other mobile device.

“Being well-informed during this public health emergency, and following health officials’ advice, can help us to slow and eventually stop the spread of Covid-19 in our communities,” said Secretary Marylou Suders, the state’s Covid-19 Command Center director. “Staying connected with our residents is a central part of our response.”

The AlertsMA notifications can be used to share news, prevention information, and help connect residents to information that they are looking for through other public information channels, such as the state’s information line, 2-1-1, and website searches on mass.gov.

The state Executive Office of Technology Services and Security partnered with Everbridge, whose platform powers AlertsMA, to bring the notification service online during the Covid-19 response. Everbridge is a Massachusetts-based company located in Burlington. The company’s notification service is assisting the public health response around the country, including New York City, San Francisco, and Houston.

“During this public health emergency, it is increasingly important that we leverage technology to enhance our ability to communicate with the residents and businesses of the commonwealth,” said Secretary of Technology Services and Security Curtis M. Wood. “This text message notification service is a tool that reaches people in the easiest way possible — on their mobile devices — to keep them informed on the latest updates from the commonwealth.”

“Statewide public notification systems like AlertsMA will keep people safe and businesses running when critical events occur,” said David Meredith, CEO of Everbridge. “With our headquarters here in Massachusetts, Everbridge proudly serves the commonwealth as their statewide mass notification provider, keeping citizens informed during Covid-19. We would like to thank the governor and the state for their continued prioritization on emergency readiness, response and communications.”

The state will promote the service on mass.gov, through digital displays and billboards at the MBTA, via MassDOT, and through social media.

USDA funding for property owners can help restore, protect wetlands

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service is making funding available to help landowners protect and restore wetlands in Massachusetts. The funding is provided through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, which protects critical water resources and wildlife habitat, and encourages private owners to maintain land for farming.

Through the voluntary sale of an easement, landowners limit future development to protect these key resources.

“The benefits of restoring, enhancing and protecting critical wetlands cannot be overstated,” said Dan Wright, Massachusetts state conservationist for NRCS. “Wetlands provide critical habitat for a wide array of wildlife species. They also store floodwaters, clean and recharge groundwater, sequester carbon, trap sediment and filter pollutants for clean water. USDA is

committed to restoring and protecting vital sensitive wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat and improve water quality.”

ACEPs Wetland Reserve Easements allow landowners to restore, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Eligible landowners may enroll in a permanent easement. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in 30-year contracts.

Interested landowners should apply by Friday, May 1. Applications should be submitted to Helen Castles, USDA-NRCS Massachusetts State Office, 451 West St., Amherst, MA 01002.

For more information about ACEP and other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS, visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

Lack of the Irish



The streets of Holyoke were quiet last Sunday, as the St. Patrick’s Day Parade was canceled for the first time in 69 years. The parade, which would have included a division from Agawam for the 20th time, was one of innumerable large-scale events, around the world, to be canceled because of the coronavirus outbreak. Agawam participants in the parade would have included a colleen and her court of five other young ladies, riding the town’s official St. Patrick’s Day float; a parade marshal and two other award winners; the Agawam High School color guard and marching band; Agawam police and fire officers; and local elected officials. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BALLWAY



Businesses surveyed on Covid impact

Pioneer Valley business and planning agencies are conducting an online survey of local businesses and organizations about how the coronavirus state of emergency has affected them.

The information gathered will be used to advocate for resources to help now and in the coming weeks and months. The survey can be found at www.surveymonkey.com/r/PVBIZCOVID and will be active until March 31.

A report of survey findings will be posted at FRCOG.org in early April.

Agencies sponsoring the survey include

the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Common Capital, Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce, MassHire Franklin Hampshire Employment Board, MassHire Hampden Employment Board, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Economic Development Partners, a group of regional and municipal planners and economic development leaders.

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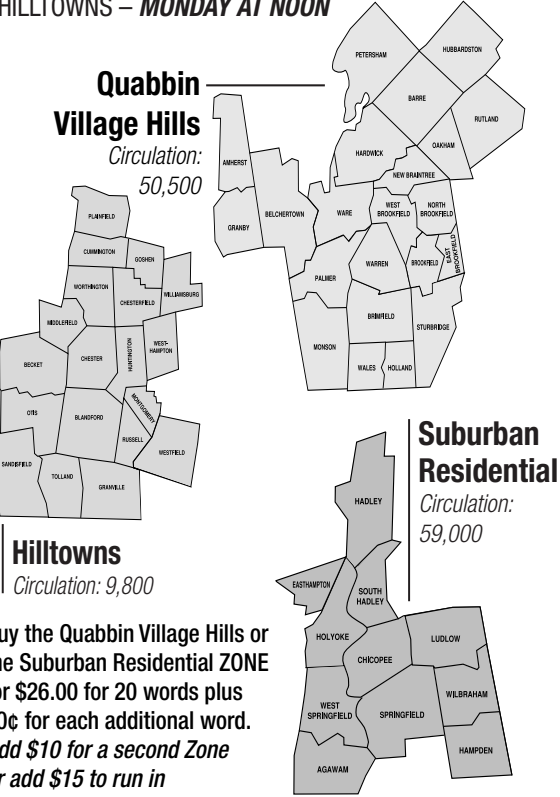
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Agawam's day in the sun



More than 50 retirees and visitors originally from Agawam enjoyed a pleasant day on March 4 for the annual Agawam Day in Florida. Participants shared stories and good times, as well as door prizes, a gift exchange and a 50-50 raffle.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



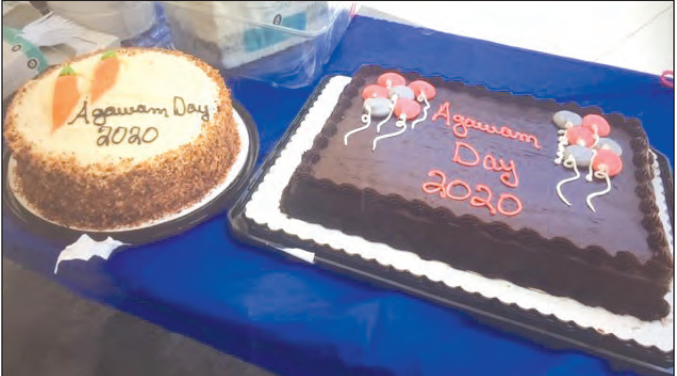
Kathy and Don Carvill, and Esther and Lillian DePalo, stand for the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of this year's Agawam Day at Fort DeSoto State Park in St. Petersburg, Fla.



Sandy Drewnowski stands with Hank Drewnowski, the organizer of the annual Agawam Day event.



Gathered at Agawam Day in Florida are, from left, Elaine Taupier, Joan Kane, Marlene Censki, George Collins (seated), Dian Curran, Bill and Judy Fearn, and Betty Denehy.



What's a party without some cake? In Florida, sugary frosting is the only kind of "icing" they get.



Hank Drewnowski leads the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of this year's Agawam Day festivities.



Susan and Jack Cavallon stand in the sun during the annual Florida get-together of Agawam natives. Though it only hit the low 50s in the Pioneer Valley, attendees of Agawam Day enjoyed temperatures in the 80s and a breeze beneath sunny skies.


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